

SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION PURSUANT TO DECISION MC-6/4

Challenges in Implementing Obligations Regarding Mercury-Added Cosmetics

Submitted by: Government of Japan

1. Introduction

In response to the invitation by the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (Ref: MC/ES/2026/36), pursuant to decision MC-6/4 of the Conference of the Parties, the Government of Japan wishes to submit the following information on an initiative relevant to the enforcement challenges associated with mercury-added cosmetics.

2. Mercury Analysis Programme for Skin-Lightening Cosmetics

The National Institute for Minamata Disease (NIMD), a research institution under the Ministry of the Environment of Japan and a WHO Collaborating Centre for Studies on the Health Effects of Mercury Compounds, has established a programme to analyse the mercury content of skin-lightening cosmetics collected from overseas markets and cross-border e-commerce platforms.

The programme accepts product samples submitted by the public, analyses them free of charge using established analytical methods, and communicates results to the submitters individually.

The programme envisages the following as potential uses of its analytical results:

- (a) Evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the Minamata Convention on Mercury;
- (b) Collaborative research with UNEP;
- (c) Development of educational and awareness-raising materials on the health risks of mercury-containing cosmetics; and
- (d) Personal risk awareness for individual users of the products analysed.

3. Current Status

The initial results of the programme have been compiled, and a paper based on the first set of analytical findings is currently under peer review at a scientific journal. Japan would be pleased to share the publication with the Secretariat once it becomes available.

In addition, NIMD has committed in-kind technical support to the UNEP/GEF project ‘Elimination of Mercury-Added Skin-Lightening Products (SLPs) in Asia and LAC’ (2026–2031), which will further support analytical capacity-building and mercury monitoring activities related to skin-lightening products.

4. Relevance to Implementation and Enforcement Challenges

As documented in the report prepared by the Secretariat for COP-6 (UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/8), mercury-containing skin-lightening products continue to be marketed and distributed globally, including through online platforms. The NIMD programme provides empirical data that may contribute to a better understanding of the scope of this challenge and support the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Convention's provisions on mercury-added cosmetics.

5. Reference

Further information on the NIMD programme is available at:

https://nimd.env.go.jp/english/activity/international_contribution/whitening_cosmetics/
